



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on February 28, 2013

Public Concern About Environmental Issues Reaches 20-Year Low

Global concern about environmental issues has tumbled to a 20-year low since the beginning of the economic recession, a new study just reported. The multi-nation poll surveyed 22,812 people across 22 countries — including Great Britain and the United States — 12 of which have been regularly polled on environmental issues since 1992.

Surveyed on six key environmental issues — species loss, auto emissions, fresh water shortages, air pollution, water pollution, and general climate change — fewer people now perceive such issues as “very serious” than in the last two decades, when research group GlobeScan first launched the annual poll. In a February 25 press release, the group reported on its revealing study:



Climate change is the only exception, where concern was lower from 1998 to 2003 than it is now. Concern about air and water pollution, as well as biodiversity, is significantly below where it was even in the 1990s. Many of the sharpest falls have taken place in the past two years.

The perceived seriousness of climate change has fallen particularly sharply since the unsuccessful UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen in December 2009. Climate concern dropped first in industrialized countries, but this year’s figures show that concern has now fallen in major developing economies such as Brazil and China as well.

Overall, 49 percent of people now consider so-called man-made climate change a “very serious” issue, a notable percentage lower than at the outset of the 2009 global financial crisis. The indication is that poor economic conditions are diverting attention from “humanitarian” concerns and prompting individuals to focus more on their own economic concerns.

Public perception on the issue has dwindled even as lawmakers and climate scientists have become more vocal in propagating the “need” for environmental policies intended to curb the impact of rising temperatures, air and water pollution, and other issues relating to the environment. “Scientists report that evidence of environmental damage is stronger than ever — but our data shows that economic crisis and a lack of political leadership mean that the public are starting to tune out,” asserted GlobeScan Chairman Doug Miller. “Those who care about mobilizing public opinion on the environment need to find new messages in order to reinvigorate a stalled debate.”

David Nussbaum, CEO of the environmental advocacy group [WWFUK](#), echoed Miller’s concerns, contending that “sustained pressure” is required by political leaders to combat these concerns. “Of course people’s concerns about climate change changed in 2009 when economic pressures were



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rising,” he [told](#) the UK Independent. “[But] the problems haven’t gone away... There are longer-term concerns that may not seem imminent that are extremely serious. A skilled political leader has got to grapple with how you act and respond to the immediate pressure people feel while helping [to take] account of the wider concerns and interests.”

Of course, one could argue that climate awareness has been following a starkly contrasting trend — that is, politicians and advocacy groups have ramped up their fear-mongering tactics to push an extreme form of climate alarmism. International summits, environmental efforts by the United Nations, and virulent campaigns here in the United States to push environmental reforms have arguably reached an all-time high.

Governments around the world have launched campaigns to curb climate change, enacting a slew of costly policies that are adding to bloated budgets and further economic degradation. The lagging interest in environmental issues also comes amid backlash against exorbitant “green” energy investments during an age of austerity.

In addition to failed international policies, such as the Kyoto Protocol, numerous green investments in the United States have ignited a certain cynicism among many Americans, as they watch their tax dollars get dumped into costly, and largely ineffective, government programs. The U.S. solar panel industry, for instance, has become a tumultuous failure, as a number of green energy companies have gone belly-up after collecting millions of dollars in taxpayer-sponsored loans and subsidies.

Solar panel maker Solyndra, a widely-known investment blunder and embarrassing mark on the Obama administration’s green energy record, harvested a [\\$535-million Energy Department loan](#) only to go bankrupt in 2011, leaving taxpayers with a hefty bill and putting more than 1,000 people out of work.

According to a [January 2012 analysis](#) by CBS News, 12 green energy companies have fallen into financial disarray after receiving more than \$6.5 billion in government assistance, five of which have already filed for bankruptcy. Moreover, strict new regulations by the Environmental Protection Agency have placed a damper on economic growth, stalling the expansion of U.S. energy independence while boosting energy bills for consumers.

Meanwhile, welfare-state countries in the European Union are suffering from severe financial crises, as governments have spent recklessly and are now demanding bailouts from other more fiscally responsible nations. In effect, high unemployment, rising consumer prices, and the potential for rising tax bills has outweighed the largely invisible benefits of crushing environmental policies and lavish green energy investments.



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